Questions and Answers in the officer consultation response to the draft UK Air Quality Plan for tackling nitrogen dioxide ('Improving air quality in the UK: tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities')

Questions 1 – 6 on the consultation portal cover administration and contact details.

7. How satisfied are you that the proposed measures set out in this consultation will address the problem of nitrogen dioxide as quickly as possible?

ANSWER Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

Brighton & Hove City Council has an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) responding to the declaration of the two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA) that we have in the City. These were both declared for nitrogen dioxide [NO2] exceedance for the annual mean. This Action Plan includes a table of measures to improve air quality and it is good to see that the 2016 Annual Status reporting process, that local authorities are now expected to follow, not only requires the reporting of the annual monitoring and modelling results for the City, but also provides an opportunity to review these measures on an annual reporting cycle.

The consultation document sets out a variety of existing and new additional measures to tackle local NO2 exceedance from road transport and other sources. Delivery of these measures is spread across a number of stakeholders, not just local authorities, and this includes industry and vehicle manufactures, DfT and defra. To deliver as 'quickly as possible' is an unknown when it is not just one party delivering these measures, also when these measures rely on policy that has not been fully defined and implemented, and when funding opportunities and resourcing of these measures have not been clearly defined.

Many of the existing measures such as retrofitting emission-reduction equipment to taxi and bus fleets, low emission zones, and educational anti- idling campaigns are already in the City's AQAP and delivery of some of these measures has relied on awards from central government including the Green Bus Fund. The concern is that funding will be redirected to the proposed new Clean Air Zones (CAZs).

There will initially be five cities required to have a CAZ, but not including Brighton & Hove. The concern is that these CAZs have been assessed and required using the national nitrogen dioxide monitoring and modelling data and not the data captured locally by local authorities and used as part of the process to declare the City's AQMA, and required as part of the statutory LAQM process.

The technical report informing the draft UK Air Quality Plan 'Improving air quality in the UK :Tackling nitrogen dioxide in our towns and cities' (Dec 2015 and revised 18 January 2016) continues to report nitrogen dioxide levels nationally in agglomerations. Brighton & Hove is part of the Brighton/Worthing /Littlehampton agglomeration (ref UK0010) covering 5 local authorities. The nitrogen dioxide data informing this technical report is from the national air quality monitoring station in Preston Park in the City and not representative of the true picture of higher NO2 levels in the affected areas and the monitoring and modelling results captured and reported in the City's Annual Status Reports.

The concern is that the national technical report informing this draft UK Air Quality Action Plan is not representative, but it is this national report and not the Annual Status reports that is defining the direction of funding opportunities to deliver measures eg CAZs. However, it is important to recognise that CAZs alone may not be enough to achieve rapid results, and other air quality measures outside of transport are also necessary.

The draft UK Air Quality Plan defines a number of new additional measures but does not define scale and quantify these measures, and in some cases provides no timescale for delivery and implementation so again makes it difficult to answer the exact question on delivery 'as quickly as possible' and there are too many unknowns.

This document does not address policy and proposals around reduction in travel. nor make reference to the significant impact that could be achieved in the short-term through a reduction in the number of vehicular kilometres that are driven. The development of a NAQP would therefore be strengthened if it was being considered as part of a UK Transport Strategy. Greater emphasis could also be placed on changes and more integration in planning and transport policy. The Planning process must be able to address the delivery of transport infrastructure to meet the needs for, and mitgation of the impacts of, development.

Very satisfied Satisfied Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied Dissatisfied Very dissatisfied Don't know

8. What do you consider to be the most appropriate way for local authorities in England to determine the arrangements for a Clean Air Zone, and the measures that should apply within it? What factors should local authorities consider when assessing impacts on businesses?

In addition to the views expressed in response to question 7, the introduction of Clean Air Zones [CAZs] should be guided and informed by evidence from local monitoring and modelling of NO2 and the evidence reported in the Annual Status Reports as part of the statutory LAQM process, and not the national results captured in the national technical report informing the draft UK Air Quality Plan. These national results are not considered to be an accurate representation and yet it is the national technical report that is directing future funding opportunities to implement measures such as CAZs.

The measures that could apply in a local CAZ will initially be defined by a local authority's AQAP and the subsequent updates of measures and progress reported in the individual Annual Status Reports. Measures will also be informed by the council's Local Transport Plan.

The measures will be defined having regard to national standards and objectives, but also consideration to the wider impacts on health, environment and economy, as well as the implications for the local highway network and general traffic movement. For example, if drivers are unwilling to pay a charge and do not enter the zone, they may drive their vehicles elsewhere and those emissions may pollute another area.

There is also valuable evidence in relation to real emission rates both at a national and local level, and it is important that Euro standards are not the only consideration.

When determining arrangements for a CAZ it is not just local businesses where impact needs assessing and understanding but also the impact on all transport operators e.g lorry fleets, Public Transport Providers (buses, coaches and taxis) and also the local population including residents. Those people, companies and operators who work nationally will benefit from a degree of consistency in the operation of CAZ restrictions, so that they are able to decide to enter any CAZ without charge rather than having to plan for different restrictions, or make rapid decisions when driving.

9. How can government best target any funding to support local communities to cut air pollution? What options should the Government consider further, and what criteria should it use to assess them? Are there other measures which could be implemented at a local level, represent value for money, and that could have a direct and rapid impact on air quality? Examples could include targeted investment in local infrastructure projects. How can government best target any funding to mitigate the impact of certain measures to improve air quality, on local businesses, residents and those travelling into towns and cities to work? Examples could include targeted scrappage schemes, for both cars and vans, as well as support for retrofitting initiatives. How could mitigation schemes be designed in order to maximise value for money, target support where it is most needed, reduce complexity and minimise scope for fraud?

Further to the responses made above, the government should utilise evidence and information provided in local AQAPs, Annual Status Reports, and Local Transport Plans to inform how funding can be targeted to support local communities to cut air pollution.

Funding provided by central government can be very defined and restricted in how it is allocated and spent. There is a need for local authorities to have greater flexibility for managing funding received and thereby target local needs, ensure value for money and achieve fast and effective delivery.

There are also opportunities in relation to the planning process. Section 106 funding could be invested in appropriate measures and provide flexibility for local authorities to develop policy on how this is allocated

Applications and allocations of funding from central government often involve short timescales and requires fast delivery and implementation. However, this sometimes conflicts with procurement rules in relation to State and European funding rules, and also local authority financial rules and standing orders, including restrictions on carry over arrangements.

The council's current AQAP includes measures and interventions and funding to deliver these is still needed and funding opportunities should not just focus on funding for new measures.

AQMAs are a good way of targeting funding to support local communities to cut air pollution but there needs to be greater consistency in relation to the statutory process for assessing and declaring an AQMA. The number of AQMAs does not represent the true picture of nitrogen dioxide exceedances. Some local authorities tightly define the areas of exceedance and will have a number of AQMAs representing and defining these. Other local authorities will declare their whole administrative area regardless of where the exceedances exist.

Car and van scrappage schemes won't help reduce emissions in AQMAs where the main NOx source is buses and taxis. Longer lasting/more reliable cars are also more common and the trend is getting longer for cars remaining on the road. When targeting funding it is important to also take account of source apportionment and also assessment and understanding of NO2 monitoring and modelling results over a long period. Again AQAP and Annual Status Reports will help to capture this evidence and information.

As the focus on fuels continues to move towards measures delivering electric vehicle [EV] and hydrogen fuel cells, it is important that funding opportunities address infrastructure demands and needs. For example, the government could place greater emphasis on encouraging or requiring existing fuel providers to deliver EV infrastructure at existing fueling stations, either freestanding or as part of supermarkets . In Brighton & Hove alone, this would amount to a further 12 or so sites where residents' or visitors' ULEVs (Ultra- Low Emission Vehicles) could refuel, and therefore help achieve the OLEV's key objectives to increase the uptake and use of EVs. The council would also be prepared to write directly to those providers to achieve some local momentum with such an initiative.

Again as technology around electric and hydrogen fuel cells develops to consider funding opportunities that enable fleet operators to buy new rather than focus on adapting and retro fit schemes

10. How best can governments work with local communities to monitor local interventions and evaluate their impact?

The Government and the devolved administrations are committed to an evidence-based approach to policy delivery and will closely monitor the implementation of the plan and evaluate the progress on delivering its objective

Policy delivery (and its performance/progress) clearly needs to be an evidence-based approach. In recent years funding opportunities have moved towards delivery of action plans and measures and away from funding to provide air quality monitoring and modelling evidence to inform decisions around measures to be implemented.

It is important that the UK Air Quality Plan is not just informed by the national technical report but by local data reported in the statutory Annual Status Reports. Funding opportunities need to be flexible to enable local authorities to manage and deliver local air quality monitoring and modelling.

Again this local evidence is extremely valuable when informing planning development and policy decisions and also transport schemes and policies.

The March 2017 publication 'Air Quality : A Briefing for Directors of Public Health' is a welcome tool to help promote and inform action to improve air quality. We would welcome more collaboration between DEFRA and Public Health England to provide additional tools to model and evaluate the health impact of local interventions, and to include impact of not just PM2.5 but also nitrogen dioxide. The forthcoming COMEAP report on the mortality effects associated with long-term average concentrations of NO2 will provide important evidence to inform action to reduce NO2.

11. Which vehicles should be prioritised for government-funded retrofit schemes?

We welcome views from stakeholders as to how a future scheme could support new technologies and innovative solutions for other vehicle types, and would welcome evidence from stakeholders on emerging technologies. We currently anticipate that this funding could support modifications to buses, coaches, HGVs, vans and black cabs

The focus for retrofitting vehicles should consider the character of the vehicles regularly moving around our cities. This will generally be public transport, taxi fleets, coaches, and opportunities on construction fleets particularly those working on major construction projects.

Local transport operators in the city, including taxis, are exploring electric battery and hydrogen fuel cell as a future possible options for their fleets, and the council is willing to continue to assist and advise those operators during their individual and commercial considerations.

12. What type of environmental and other information should be made available to help consumers choose which cars to buy?

Reducing harmful exhaust emissions and developing new vehicle technologies can help improve air quality, but the most immediate way to tackle air pollution would be to reduce the number of vehicle kilometres travelled. This requires behavioural change through other means that can change habits and encourage a shift to more active travel. For example, one less regular weekday journey to work by car equates to a 20% reduction in emissions. Therefore the focus should not just be on vehicle purchase.

An effective public education and publicity strategy is vital in achieving awareness and acceptance of the need to change behaviour to achieve better air quality. Engagement with the public is also key. For example, advice to the general public and businesses could also include education on acceleration and deceleration which can be a greater source of exhaust and no-exhaust emissions than idling.

The government could consider having a rating scheme for vehicles and this could include vehicles with auto-off when stationary, emphasis on NOx and fine PM emissions, also health impacts.

It should also be noted that averaged emission rates for urban, super urban or freeway may not be representative of how vehicles perform in AQMAs.

There is an opportunity to consider that all new vehicles should have batteries for ancillaries so that engines do not need to be on for heating, air conditioning and charging devices. All petrol and diesel cars could have a “congestion mode” where the battery provides propulsion in stop-start congested traffic.

13. How could the Government further support innovative technological solutions and localised measures to improve air quality?

Keep up communications with Defra advisory group and to use evidence to inform policy decisions.

As stated elsewhere in this response, the government could place great emphasis on fuel station operators to install electric vehicle charging points and the defra Local Air Pollution Permitting (LAPC) inspection scheme be reviewed to cover this.

Use S106 and CIL from developer contributions to further increase the uptake and use of ULEVs and active travel.

14. Do you have any other comments on the draft UK Air Quality Plan for tackling nitrogen dioxide?

Emphasis need to be placed on addressing the impacts of the highest mileage vehicles most frequently passing through or moving around the AQMA. This enables the high or moderate NOx emitters frequently operating in the AQMA to be targeted..